

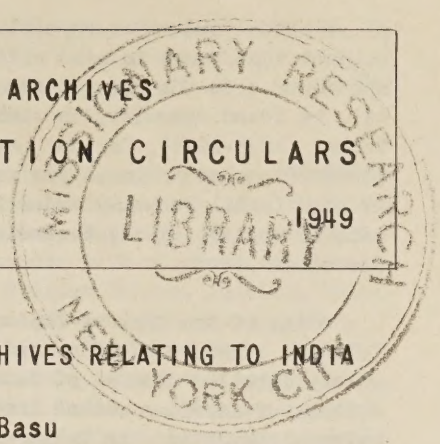
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THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES
REFERENCE INFORMATION CIRCULARS

No. 38



MATERIALS IN THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES RELATING TO INDIA

By Purnendu Basu

United States interest in India dates back to the latter part of the eighteenth century when the appointment of Benjamin Joy, the first United States consul at Calcutta, was confirmed by the Senate on November 21, 1792. By that time British paramountcy in India and Indian waters was well established, and no independent diplomatic relations could develop between the two countries; and none did until 1941 when Thomas M. Wilson went to New Delhi as commissioner of the United States to India with the rank of minister. The date of the first consular despatch from Calcutta is November 24, 1794. In the years that followed there was a good deal of trading between India and the United States; besides, a fair number of United States citizens either visited India from time to time or resided there as consular officials, businessmen, employees of the Indian Government or of Indian business firms, missionaries, teachers, and so on. Similarly, Indians were numbered among the visitors to the United States as students, businessmen, lecturers, or travelers, while many settled there until the Immigration Act of 1924 put an end to Indians' coming in any numbers to the United States. Thus intercourse between the United States and India has been of long standing and regular, and that fact is reflected in at least 39 record groups in the National Archives. India, it will be remembered, included Burma until 1937.

Naturally in the circumstances mentioned above, most of the records of Indian interest in the National Archives relate to economic and commercial affairs. The richest among these records are the reports of the United States consuls in India. The consuls did not confine themselves to economic and commercial affairs alone; most of them did a great deal

¹Some of the records described in this Reference Information Circular are confidential in character and special authorization to use them may be necessary. The symbol "RG" and a number in parentheses refer to the record group to which the records being discussed belong.

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of political and other reporting as well. In fact, there is hardly any subject that comes to mind which was not treated in the consular correspondence. In the general records of the Department of State (PG 59) will be found consular despatches from Calcutta (1794-96 and 1843-1929), Bombay (1838-1929), Karachi, Madras, and Rangoon (1908-29), and Colombo (1907-29); also included are returns and reports from consular agents at Aden (until recently under the administrative control of the Government of India), Akyab, Moulmein, Bassein, Cocanada, Chittagong, and a few other places.

Some of the typical topics covered in the consular reports are as follows: Trade conditions and tariff regulations; Burma trade and commerce; detailed studies of means of communication in India; the introduction of American cotton into India; trade in the Persian Gulf; agricultural conditions in India and Ceylon; competition between American and Russian kerosene in India; natural resources and their development; regulations governing residence, trade, and travel in India; mines and mining; financial affairs; fisheries; and India's trade with different countries. Besides regular reports on these and similar topics, including statistical returns, the consuls reported on such matters as the Second Punjab War (1848), the Burma War (1852-53), a plan for steam navigation across the Pacific (1852), a proposal by "the Parsees and Hindus of Bombay to contribute half the cost of a hospital or orphanage for sufferers" of the American Civil War (1864), the "advance of Russian army into India" (1854), Hindu missionaries in the United States, Hindu hatred of British rule, the power of the East India Company, and the American School of Indo-Iranian Research in India. In the later years regular reporting on a greater variety of subjects became the rule. There were, for example, reports on specific industries, agriculture, labor conditions, commerce, floods, earthquakes, famines, general economic conditions, suffrage, citizenship, civil service, legislation, justice, municipal government, police organization, hygiene and sanitation, social organizations, public works, communications, religion, education, and the monetary system. All these reports are contained in three main series of this record group, consular despatches, 1789-1906, the "numerical" files, 1906-10, and the "decimal" files, 1910-29, of the Department of State. Within the latter series, a sub-series entitled "Commerce; Trade Agreements," contains records relating specifically to the matters indicated; another subseries contains records relating to "Americans in India"; while a third relates to "protection of German, Austrian, and Turkish individuals and interest in India" during the early years of World War I.

Also in Record Group 59 are the consular trade and political reports, 1925-45 which continue in the same strain. The political reports, which were filed separately until 1935, are particularly voluminous. Consular inspection reports, 1906-39, especially the very detailed reports by consuls in answer to questionnaires submitted by the inspectors, contain some interesting material, including photographs and maps.

In these records are data relating to American trade penetration in the Indian market. Very fruitful sources of information about political conditions in India are the reports and other materials sent to the Department of State by the United States Embassy in London.

The materials referred to so far in this record group were created largely as a result of direct United States-India relations. There are, however, sizable Indian populations in other countries occupying positions of varying significance in the economic life of those countries. These are in the main British Columbia, British Guiana, Jamaica, Trinidad, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, the Laccadives and Maldives, Aden, Behrein, Ceylon, the Straits Settlements, the Federated Malay States, Fiji, British South and East Africa, Zanzibar, the Seychelles, Mauritius, French Indo-China, and the Dutch East Indies. Consular reports from these places contain information about Indians there, for example, about Mahatma Gandhi's first "satyagraha" (passive resistance) movement in South Africa (1918-19).

Information similar to that in the general records of the Department of State (RG 59) is also to be found in the records of Foreign Service Posts (RG 84) for the following consular posts: Calcutta (1855-1912); Bombay (1855-1922); Karachi (1887-1912); Rangoon (1891-1912); Madras (1867-1912); Colombo (1870-1919); Chittagong (1866-1920); Akyab (1866-90); and Bassein (1880-85). These records duplicate to a certain extent the information contained in the consular despatches discussed above, but the post records contain much additional information of interest to students of Indian affairs. Of special interest are the following series for the various posts: Copies of despatches to the State Department; original instructions received from the State Department; miscellaneous correspondence--"general," "general and trade," and "trade"; copies of reports; and registers of American citizens. These records include correspondence with local business firms and individuals; records of births, marriages, and deaths of American citizens in India and of the settlement of their estates; documents pertaining to the protection of American citizens; certificates of merchandise shipped from or received in the consular districts; journals of events and memoranda; financial records and property inventories of the posts; and various maritime documents having to do with American ships and seamen.

Because India is a predominantly agricultural country, Indian agricultural resources and methods have been of interest to the United States. In the central files of the Office of the Secretary of Agriculture (RG 16) are correspondence and reports relating to Indian agriculture that were prepared by special agents of the Department and were sent to the Section of Foreign Markets, 1894-1905. These records contain information about Indian markets; reports made by consular officials and the Department's special agents to the various bureaus of the Department contain information of specific interest to those bureaus (namely, to the Office of Foreign Agricultural Relations, the Bureau of Entomology

and Plant Quarantine, the Bureau of Chemistry and Soils, the Bureau of Animal Industry, the Food and Drug Administration, the Bureau of Plant Industry, and the Forest Service). These reports cover the period 1889-1940.

In the records of the Office of Foreign Agricultural Relations and its predecessors (RG 166) are several series of reports, 1901-43, originating mainly with consular officials, agricultural trade commissioners, agricultural attachés, and special agents. These consist of reports on foreign agricultural production, market trends, prices, and consumption statistics, 1903-38; reports on all phases of forestry in foreign countries, assembled by the Forest Service, 1901-41; and cables giving current trends in agricultural production, marketing, and prices abroad, 1922-43. Also in this group are records relating to various international agricultural conferences, 1923-41. A fair amount of material relating to India will be found among these records. The types of reports vary considerably; some are very detailed, giving information on such matters as crop production and crop forecasts, tariffs and trade regulations, livestock and meat products, and foreign trade and economic conditions, while others are very general in character. The forestry and forest-product reports contain information on planting, lumbering, protection legislation, silviculture, and forest products. As in the case of the consular despatches, the reports from such places as Ceylon, Fiji, Mauritius, and the Straits Settlements have a bearing on India inasmuch as Indians in large numbers are engaged in agricultural activities in those places.

In the general files of the Bureau of Entomology and Plant Quarantine and its predecessors, 1908-34, and in the correspondence of the Federal Horticultural Board, 1912-28 (both in RG 7), is a variety of information about plant and insect life in India; for example, there are materials on mosquito control and malaria and on the culture of silkworms. The records of the Food and Drug Administration (RG 38) include at least two series that contain material relating to India. The first consists of records of the Office of the Supervising Tea Examiner, 1912-37, whose function was to examine and report on the quality of tea imported into the United States. As quite a large quantity of tea is imported from India, reports on such imports are among these records, but they are difficult to find as the arrangement of the records is by ports of entry and shipments and not by the origin of the consignment. The second series is on foreign food and drug laws, 1929-40. Reference has already been made to the Forest Service compilations among the general records of the Department of Agriculture. Further information about forestry in India, comparative studies of Indian and United States timbers, and similar topics can be found in the "Research Compilation File" in the records of the Forest Service (RG 95).

A good deal of commercial, financial, and industrial information on India is to be found in the records of the following agencies: the Bu-

reau of the Census, 1800-1944 (RG 29), the Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce, 1906-43 (RG 151), the United States Tariff Commission, 1909-39 (RG 81), the United States Shipping Board, 1916-39 (RG 32), the War Trade Board, 1917-21 (RG 182), the Foreign Economic Administration, 1939-47 (RG 169), and the Office of the Special Adviser to the President on Foreign Trade, 1934-36 (RG 20). Trade commissioners' reports in RG 151 are particularly rich in relevant information. The reports were made monthly by trade commissioners attached to the consulates, some of them being required and many of them being voluntary. They consist of reports (containing statistics) on the foreign trade of India arranged by Indian ports, reports on the over-all foreign trade of the country, notes on specific items of export and import, summaries of annual trade and economic reviews, weekly financial reports, and reports on provincial and central budget and construction activities in India. These are supplemented by a sizable collection of photographs representing various phases of the economic life of the country. More specific data on trade between India and the United States are contained in the records of the Bureau of the Census (RG 29) in a series of import and export statistics, 1923-38, which gives monthly figures of imports and exports by United States ports broken down by country, commodity, quantity, and value. Records of the collectors of customs (RG 36) give the sailings from Indian ports to various United States ports, 1789-1936. These records include cargo manifests, passenger lists, and crew lists. A very small quantity of information on Indian trade can also be found in the "Foreign Trade Information" series, 1919-39, of the War Finance Corporation (RG 154). Similarly, among the records of the Office of the Special Adviser to the President on Foreign Trade (RG 20), small quantities of materials relating to India for the period 1934-36 will be found in the general correspondence, in reports of special representatives on reciprocity information, and in special studies related to foreign commercial restrictions.

In the records of the War Trade Board (RG 182) there is somewhat fuller information on India's commercial economy during World War I. In a series of country studies made by the Board's Bureau of Research and Statistics, there are studies on the economic situation of India before and during the war, reports on various industries and natural resources, and a memorandum on accumulated shortages or stocks of key commodities. In the records of the Bureau of War Trade Intelligence are studies on trade, industry, and joint stock companies in India. For similar information during the World War II period, the records of the Foreign Economic Administration and its predecessors (RG 169) are valuable. In this record group the records of the Office of Lend-Lease Administration, the Office of Economic Warfare, the President's Liaison Committee, and the British Empire Branch of the Administration's Bureau of Areas contain materials relating to India. They offer information on a variety of subjects like export controls, munitions production, industrial plants, port storage and transportation facilities, and agricultural production. A small number of photographs on Indian agriculture are included among these records.

Information regarding Indian tariff laws and tariff rates will be found in relevant parts of consular reports for the period 1909-39 among the records of the United States Tariff Commission (RG 81). Additional data concerning taxes and duties on American goods imported into India and discriminations against American shipping by the Government of India (1919-23) are among the records of the United States Shipping Board (RG 32). Also in this record group a series entitled "Trade Routes and Services" gives details covering the establishment of regular shipping service between India and the United States and the companies participating in this service. Logs of ships plying this route often contain interesting bits of information about local events at the time the ships were in Indian ports, port regulations, weather conditions, and so forth. The general files of the Shipping Board contain some studies and consular reports on commerce and industries in India and Indian customs revenues. The ships' logs kept among the records of the United States Maritime Commission (RG 178) also contain interesting local information.

A matter of considerable interest to students of Indian affairs is Indian emigration. Contrary to popular belief, Indians from the very earliest times have ventured out of their own country and sought a new life in a new country. Reference has already been made to some of the countries where there are today substantial numbers of Indian settlers. Many came to the United States, too, under various circumstances and had varied receptions. Some came as students, some as missionaries and lecturers on Hindu philosophy and culture, some as businessmen, and others as mere travelers; some were political refugees who had from time to time shared in a number of abortive attempts to overthrow the British Government in India, while some were fortune seekers who like so many others looked upon the United States as the Land of Promise. On the whole their influx, with that of the Chinese and Japanese, was frowned upon. That gave rise to such organizations as the Asiatic Exclusion League, and much journalistic and legislative energy was expended on threshing the matter out. The general records of the Department of Justice (RG 60) and the records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service (RG 85), the Senate (RG 46), and the House of Representatives (RG 233) abound in references to this controversy, to activities of the Indians in the United States, to immigration policies with regard to Indians in Canada, and to similar subjects. Records of the Senate Committees on Immigration through the years indicate the steps leading to the passage of the Immigration Act of 1924, popularly known as the Exclusion Act, while petitions and memoranda presented to the Committees on Immigration present the opinions of various classes of American people and organizations both for and against free Indian immigration. Stray references to India are also to be found in the records of the Senate Committees on Commerce and Foreign Relations dealing with consular services. Parallel information is contained in the records of the House of Representatives (RG 233).

More specific cases of Indians applying for citizenship and the decisions in such cases are recorded in the general files of the Immigration and Naturalization Service (RG 85). This series also contains records of general policy discussions and consultations between United States and Canadian immigration authorities on Indian immigration into these two countries and information on the attempt by the Canadian Government to divert all Indians in Canada to British Honduras. Also in the general files are details of the interesting episode of the Komagata Maru and of the Maverick and Annie Larsen affair. In 1914 a rich Indian merchant chartered a Japanese ship, the Komagata Maru, and brought over 300 Indians with the intention of landing them in Canada in defiance of the newly passed Canadian law restricting the entry of Indians. The attempt failed but not without creating a great sensation, which had its repercussions in rioting in Vancouver. The ship then sailed down the coast to Seattle where, again, the intending immigrants were not permitted to land. The Maverick and Annie Larsen affair was of a different type. In 1913 there was founded in India a revolutionary organization called the Yugantar Ashram, which had as its objective the overthrow of the British Government of India by force. Eventually most of its members who escaped the gallows sought refuge in the United States, Germany, and Japan. When World War I broke out those in the United States (who called their organization the Hindustan Ghadr Party) collected with the help of certain Germans arms and ammunitions to be sent to India for use by the revolutionaries still there. The plan miscarried and the two ships chartered for this purpose were seized while still in United States territorial waters and the cargo was confiscated. Some personal details relating to Indian revolutionaries in this country are also in these files. Incidentally, a good deal of material on the activities of the Ghadr Party and on British discussions with the United States Government regarding it is to be found in the records of the United States Embassy in London (RG 59). More correspondence between the British Embassy and the State Department regarding restrictions on the export of arms and ammunitions to India and regarding the Ghadr Party is in the general files, 1898-1939, of the Bureau of Insular Affairs (RG 126). Personal details of Indians generally in this country will be found in the reentry permit and alien registry case files among the records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, while in the agricultural census records of the Census Bureau (RG 29) will be found details concerning a number of Indians who have settled in Arizona and California as farmers and agriculturists.

In the central files, 1790-1945, of the Department of Justice (RG 60) is a fairly large collection of documents dealing with the activities of the Hindustan Ghadr Party, its relations with Germans during World War I, the noncooperation movement in India, activities of Hindu missionaries (Swamis) in California and elsewhere in the United States, and questions relating to the holding of land by Indians in the Western States. There are also among these records stray bits of information about Indian prison laws, enemy property held in India during World War

I, the status of Indians under naturalization laws, the employment of Indian seamen on American ships, the eligibility of British Indians for United States citizenship, and the possibilities of marine transportation between India and the United States.

The Bureau of Insular Affairs (RG 126) collected from about 1901 to 1910 data on India because it was thought that the experiences of British government in India might serve as starting points in formulating United States policy in the Philippines. Hence there are reports on a system of cooperative banks, irrigation, the monetary system, trade regulations, health and sanitation, general administration, and the like. There are also documents dealing with the practice of Indians, normally not admitted to the United States, of stopping over at Manila for a short time in order to establish that as a starting point from which to come to this country. An interesting series of claims exists among these records of old Portuguese and Spanish families who had migrated from India to the Philippines. Materials on foreign activities, 1927-29, in the general files of the Bureau of Reclamation (RG 115) contain reports on Indian irrigation, the construction of dams, the reclamation of waste lands, water power, water resources, commerce, and industries.

So far we have dealt with materials relating mainly to the economic and political life of India and the question of Indians in the United States. Several record groups in the National Archives have materials relating to other phases of Indian life. In the general files, 1897-1923, of the Public Health Service (RG 90) are reports on diseases prevalent in India such as cholera, plague, smallpox, malaria, leprosy, and dysentery. There are also mortality figures for various cities and for the country as a whole. Similar information for the period 1936-44 is to be found in the general classified records of the Foreign Governments Section of the Service; and information for the years prior to 1897 is contained in the National Board of Health records in the same group.

Two series among the records of the Hydrographic Office (RG 37) contain a large quantity of materials relating to Indian waters, locations of places, ports, and meteorology. There is a good collection of maps and charts illustrating the above in the Cartographic Records Branch of the National Archives. The records of the Coast and Geodetic Survey (RG 23) contain reports on earthquakes and seismological registers from foreign countries, 1899-1943, including India. The records relating to India in both RG 37 and RG 23, however, are irregular and were collected incidentally, inasmuch as no regular survey of Indian waters was undertaken by the United States Government.

Other interesting materials are to be found in the "Interrogatory Files," 1897-1932, of the Bureau of the Mint (RG 104). This series contains reports on foreign coinage, statistical data, and correspondence, and, so far as India is concerned, it covers such topics as the amount

of gold and silver coinage, coinage executed in India for other governments, the weight of gold and silver used in industrial arts and returned from industrial arts for monetary use, total imports into India of United States gold and silver, gold and silver production of Indian mines, laws affecting coinage, currency, banking, the import and export of gold, and the operation of mints.

Coming to more recent years, the records, 1941-45, of the Foreign Broadcast Intelligence Service (RG 173) include sound recordings, transcripts, and analyses of Indian shortwave broadcasts and broadcasts made from underground stations like Azad Hind, Avadian Indian, and India Freedom. The collection of gift motion pictures in the National Archives (RG 200) includes some interesting motion pictures on India. There are three "volumes" of the March of Time, two entitled India in Crisis, dated May and June 1942, and a third entitled British Imperialism, dated August 1944. Besides these there are a number of Paramount news reels depicting various aspects of Indian life from 1942 through 1948. Perhaps the most interesting films on India in the National Archives are those included in the series of "Thomas Armat" films. These consist of motion pictures produced in the early days of the industry by Pathé and others, many of them before 1900, and they include about 2,000 feet of film devoted to contemporary Indian scenes. Among the gift sound recordings in the National Archives (RG 201) there is a recording of Gandhi's speech at the Inter-Asian Relations Conference at New Delhi in 1947.

So much for bodies of records containing information about India that was deliberately collected. There is, in addition, a considerable stock of information on India in other record groups, which found its way there more by chance than by deliberate effort. On the whole, these materials can be described as fragmentary and consist principally of isolated pieces. Such, for instance, are letters from officers commanding naval vessels that touched Indian waters or Indian ports, which are in the Naval Records Collection of the Office of Naval Records and Library (RG 45). For instance, among the letters of Commodore Robert W. Shufeldt of the Flagship Ticonderoga, during its cruise along the coasts of Africa and Asia in 1878-80, there are sparkling accounts of the British Government of South Africa, Aden, India, and the Malayan Peninsula and observations on the political, industrial, and commercial affairs of those countries. There are also journals and logs of certain British warships among these records, for example, those of H.M.S. Ceres on a voyage from London to Madras, Manila, and Canton and back to London, 1797-98, which contain a detailed description of the town and harbour of Madras, its people, and their manners and customs and drawings of Fort St. George. Such accounts are interesting and often include some references to contemporary incidents of local interest. Another interesting item in the Naval Records Collection is a journal of astronomical experiments and observations made by Sir William Burrough, Judge of the Supreme Court of Bengal, which contains his amendment of La Lande's methods of finding the longitude at sea based on observations

made at Madras, Calcutta, and on the sea. The "area files" (area 10 and Indian Ocean), "captains' letters," "commanders' letters," and "squadron letters" in this record group contain a variety of information about India and the Indian seas.

Similarly, among the records of the Army War College (RG 165) there is a small quantity of materials relating to Indian army organization and to military incidents of interest. They are not in any organized series but are scattered throughout the whole body of records. Typical subject headings are: Military administration in India, Indian troops in France and Mesopotamia during World War I, and equipment, pay, and appointment of army officers. There are photographs of Indian troops in China during the Boxer rising in 1900-1901.

Among the records of the Weather Bureau (RG 27) are two series, meteorological observations, 1819-1942, and records of the Marine Division, 1842-1940, that contain meteorological data from Indian areas. The files of the General Director of the United States Railroad Administration (RG 14) include a small quantity of records dealing with the mileage and history of Indian railways compiled in 1919. In correspondence files, 1942-46, of the Bureau of Aeronautics (RG 72) there is a reference to activities of Indian Army paratroops against the Hur banditti in Sind; the records of the Bureau of Lighthouses (RG 26) contain inquiries from the Government of India regarding radio beacons and the replies thereto. During World War II the Office of War Information received cables from all the war theaters and among them are cables from the China-Burma-India Theater (RG 208). This record group also contains a few photographs of military actions in Burma. During the same period the activities of the Recreation Section of the Special Services Division of the Bureau of Naval Personnel extended to the China-Burma-India Theater, and the records of those activities (RG 24) contain some references to the recreational facilities for soldiers available in India and the entertainment programs for United States military personnel in that area.

The above does not by any means exhaust all the materials relating to India in the National Archives. Scattered among other record groups is much information, but it is difficult to find. For instance, in the records of the Alabama Claims Commission (RG 76) are documents relating to claims arising out of the depredations of the Florida, which sank, among others, a ship carrying a cargo of saltpeter from India for the Duponts. Among the papers filed in connection with that claim are returns of Indian trading houses and shipping agents. Another example is the material relating to the passing of an act of April 23, 1918 (40 Stat. 535), among the records of the Senate (RG 46) and the House of Representatives (RG 233). One purpose of this legislation was to help Britain counteract German propaganda in India during World War I. In fact, even where there was no direct contact between India and the

United States, India formed part or even sometimes the basis of some transactions between the United States and Great Britain, and a thorough examination of records relating to United States-British relations will undoubtedly bring to light much that will relate to India and will help explain incidents in India.

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NATIONAL ARCHIVES REFERENCE INFORMATION CIRCULARS

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34. Cuba. 1948. 13 p.
 35. The Dominican Republic. 1948. 11 p.
 36. Transportation. 1948. 39 p.
- No. 37. Civilian Personnel Records in the National Archives. 1948. 26 p.
- No. 38. Materials in the National Archives Relating to India. 1949. 11 p.